



MEDIA RELEASE:

Winter wheat's quandary to increase production

Nov. 20, 2010 (Calgary, Alberta)—Despite its time-saving, environmental sustainability and yield benefits, winter wheat continues to struggle to gain a foothold with Alberta producers, members of the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission heard at their recent 20th annual general meeting. Winter wheat acreage in the province dipped to 170,000 acres in 2010 from an all-time high of 270,000 acres in 2008.

Although winter wheat is one of the fastest growing crops in Alberta, overall annual acres planted is well below one million acres, a target the Commission set as target for 2015. Kent Erickson, the AWWPC's chairman, says while farmers will consider winter wheat's many benefits, their ultimate decision to grow the crop comes down to economics.

"Producers have to make money. But current marketing programs and the tendering process for Western Canadian producers are confusing and don't offer any real incentive to grow the Select, or premium, milling winter wheat," Erickson says.

Rick Istead, the executive director of AWWPC, says the Commission is working with the Canadian Wheat board and a number of other agricultural organizations across western Canada to "create simple but effective programs that promote and solidify the value of winter wheat."

Representatives of the CWB and the Commission met earlier in the month to discuss how various marketing programs and the tendering process affect producers and what can be done to make things better.

"Our argument is that producers who deliver select winter wheat are not getting their usual trucking incentives due to tendering and that the prices paid western Canadian producers are considerably below the average world price," AWWPC director (Region 3) and marketing lead John Hopkins says. "And we know the CWB struggles with being able to offer its customers a consistent quality and quantity of winter wheat."

Winter wheat's quandary, Hopkins says, is that more producers won't grow winter wheat until the prices offer more value and that prices won't offer more value until more producers grow more winter wheat.

more . . .

“Canada’s production of winter wheat is the polar opposite to the rest of world,” Istead says. “In virtually every other wheat-growing nation, winter wheat accounts for the majority of production. In Canada, spring wheat accounts for approximately 80 per cent of our wheat acreage.”

The Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission is a provincial grower organization focused on a strong and sustainable winter wheat industry for the benefit of all Alberta producers. The AWWPC leads efforts to make winter wheat a viable crop option by supporting innovative research, developing valued-added marketing programs, and providing producers with relevant and timely information.

The Commission’s 20th annual general meeting was on Nov. 10 in Red Deer.

— 30 —

For more information, contact:
Kent Erickson, Chairman
Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission
780.754.2541 or 780.336.5509

Rick Istead, Executive Director
Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission
403.271.0939 or 403.869.8184

John Hopkins, Director, Region 3
Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission
403.833.3749 or 403.528.7515